

# Successfully Transitioning to MMS

**At MMS, we have created a well-planned, developmentally appropriate transition program which involves all key people: students, school staff at the elementary and middle school levels, and parents. Here is what we do, why we do this and how we do this:**

- Elementary school students are involved in a variety of activities preparing them for middle school. They have the opportunity to visit MMS in May and meet the staff and students, particularly the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and tour the school. They also have the opportunity to meet MMS students who visit their elementary school to answer their specific questions. Teachers in the elementary schools also discuss middle school issues with students that lessen their concerns, build their confidence, and reduce their anxiety.
- The Sunshine Club hosts a New Student after school Welcoming Party early in September to cultivate a friendly atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion.
- At MMS, students who are part of The Sunshine Club are prepared for and included in orientation presentations through training they participate in. Throughout the school year, Sunshine Club members learn the skills necessary to help new families and students manage the new school environment. These skills include positive communication, diffusing worries and sensitively including all students with diverse backgrounds.
- MMS leaders support the planning of several events that involve students, teachers, and parents. Each elementary school's visitation to MMS and the Getting To Know You Evening in May are focused on providing a positive message about middle school from administrators, that it is safe and fun. Administrators also focus on providing information about the changes that early adolescents will be experiencing during the Middle School years.
- Elementary school and MMS staff -- teachers, counselors, and staff members -- is made aware of the student concerns and the anxieties of moving into MMS. We approach our students with an upbeat and reassuring demeanor, confident that we are willing and able to support all students.
- MMS teachers are well versed in the developmental issues of middle school students. They also are aware that students will experience anxieties associated with the change. We encourage families before school starts to work towards neutralizing these anxieties by discussing the opportunities available at MMS. In the summer, the school counselors mail postcards home to incoming 5<sup>th</sup> graders to let them know who their homeroom teacher will be so they can arrive at MMS looking for a specific name, friendly face and known location.
- Parents are encouraged to attend the Getting To Know You Evening in May and the Open House in September to learn about the curriculum as well as the concerns and questions their children may have. Parents are also invited to attend a day at MMS in October to follow their student's schedule firsthand! They are also encouraged to make an appointment for a Parent Teacher Conference in November to discuss their student's progress.
- Throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, administrators, teachers, and school counselors share articles of interest and information with parents so that they can learn about young adolescents and their developmental issues and stages. This information helps parents understand this new and wonderful person with whom they live, and be able to interact with them in positive ways that build relationships.

**MMS' well-planned transition program helps parents and students have a greater peace of mind by taking the stress out of the summer before middle school and providing the groundwork for a successful beginning of the middle school adventure.**